

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability

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MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

In recent years our work has evolved to focus on four broad themes:

- o Promoting development, especially needed housing, in Development Focus Areas where jobs, services, and transportation options are available.
- o Reducing greenhouse gas emissions through proactive action to transition to renewable energy while also identifying and addressing the anticipated impacts of climate change.
- o Protecting key natural resources primarily in our Natural Features and Agricultural Resource Focus Areas, but also in key links between them.
- o Improving our economy and the quality of life through targeted tourism implementation plans and community investments supported by the Tourism Program.

Following adoption of the new County Comprehensive Plan in 2015, the Department of Planning and Sustainability's focus in 2016 was on actions identified in the Plan. In the pages that follow, you'll see tangible progress in the four areas outlined above. Collaboration remains a key guiding principle in all of the work that we do, and 2016 included engagement with many local municipalities, organizations, and State agencies.

As 2016 was my last full year as Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability, I am extremely

gratified by the many accomplishments outlined in this annual report. They were only possible because of the outstanding work of the dedicated staff in the Department of Planning and Sustainability, the leadership provided by the County Legislature and County Administrator, and the many partnerships throughout the community and with the State of New York.

Over the 15-plus years of my tenure, the department has worked to help turn the community dialogue toward focused, compact development, natural area and farmland protection, a renewable energy future, and tourism program investments that support a vibrant community. However, we continue to face challenges and questions.

Will the community be willing to accept the affordable housing options needed to accommodate everyone?

Can we maintain intact forests and productive farms in the face of continued subdivision of rural lands?

What will it take to gain community acceptance and support for renewable energy systems?

Can we develop our economy while maintaining the small town quality of life we've come to expect?

And will we find the resources to enhance transportation options that encourage more people to become less reliant on single-occupancy automobile trips?

My crystal ball isn't any better than anyone else's, but I believe that with continued proactive efforts a realistic vision of the future includes positive responses to these challenges.

Through work with landowners and municipalities, it is possible to maintain an intact landscape of farms, fields, and forests covering 75-80% of the County's land area.

Municipalities working with developers and transportation providers can create walkable neighborhoods with adequate housing

for everyone and a variety of environmentally friendly transportation options.

Wind and solar energy projects can come to be accepted and appreciated for the better world they are creating.

We can create a dynamic economy that focuses on fulfilling the promise of meaningful work at a fair wage for everyone in the community.

Great local food, theater, arts, music, and festivals can enrich our lives and be enjoyed with family and friends.

And as we densify development and become a bit more urban, we can be equally vigilant in setting aside more places to experience nature and participate in a diverse array of outdoor activities on land and water.

Tompkins County is a great community and we should always appreciate all that we have. But we must also remember that not everyone has the same opportunity to share in the quality of life so many enjoy. I am confident that this community will always strive to be an even better, more inclusive version of the place it is today.



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Housing

Housing Needs Assessment and Strategy

The Needs Assessment was completed in November 2016, following both public meetings and discussions with the Planning Advisory Board (PAB), Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee (PDEQ), Health & Human Services Cabinet, and housing strategy partners. Results were incorporated into presentations delivered at both the November 30 and December 1 Housing Summit events. The Needs Assessment provided a basis for initial housing unit targets for the Housing Strategy, which will be completed in 2017.

Human Service Housing Needs

In addition to meeting with the Health & Human Services Cabinet, staff incorporated conversations with supportive housing providers and review of their waiting lists into the Executive Summary of the Housing Needs Assessment to provide additional detail regarding supportive housing needs.

Community Housing Development Fund

Worked with applicants, assisted in the bylaws revision, and provided staff support for Application Review and Program Oversight Committee meetings. Staff developed a new full-year Notice of Funding Availability with three sets of deadlines and funding decision dates for 2016 to enable applicants to better plan their project timelines. The 2016 funding rounds resulted in \$881,250 in funding awards to support 214 units of



permanently affordable housing -- the largest amount of funds and number of units supported in a single year since the program's creation in 2009.

Homeownership Program Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Environmental Review for the Tompkins County Homeowners XI program was completed in January 2016, with contracts executed and funds released in March. Of 19 slots, 12 applicants had been accepted by the end of 2016 and the Legislature approved the use of Program Income funds to support any shortfall should the program spend down its funds prior to a new CDBG award.

Healthy Homes CDBG

This housing rehabilitation program was completed in November 2016, and the grant closed out with all \$400,000 in CDBG funds expended. A total of 21 lower-income homeowners were assisted, and 26 rehab activities were completed since some homes required more than one type of assistance. Energy efficiency improvements were made to 16 units, septic system repairs/replacements were provided for seven units, and three units received water well-related repairs.



Housing Strategy Partners

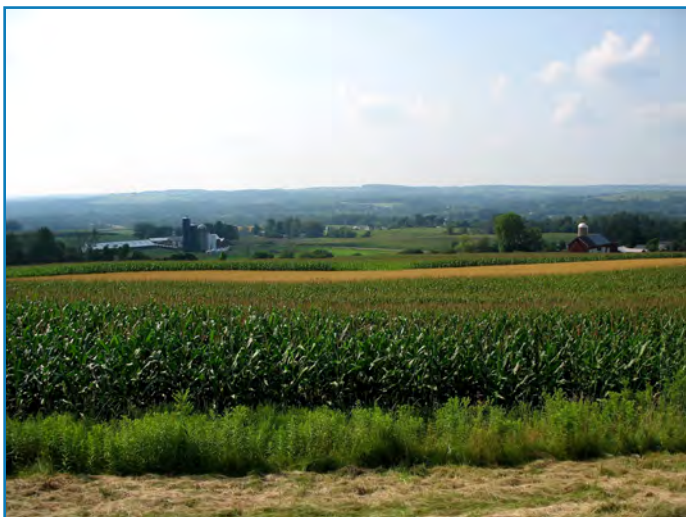
The group of housing professionals continued their involvement in the Housing Needs Assessment, meeting with the project consultant in June and September 2016. Many members were also involved in development of the Housing Summit, which led to staff conversations regarding how the partners and the Summit planning committee could move forward to better support development of the new Housing Strategy as well as provide a framework for a “housing solutions team,” as was suggested during the Summit.



Housing Summit

Staff provided oversight, grant management, and extensive event planning assistance to develop and hold the Summit on November 30 and December 1, 2016. Each event received extensive media coverage, drew over 200 participants, included a presentation by the Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability, and provided input to inform the Housing Strategy and other housing-related efforts by the County and other partners in the community. Meetings continue regarding next steps, and videos of the sessions, a Facebook page and website developed for the event, email lists, and evaluation form content provide ongoing resources.





Heritage Tourism Strategy

Completed and adopted the Tompkins County Heritage Tourism Implementation Plan in early 2016. Heritage Tourism is a focus area in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan. In addition, staff made progress toward implementation of this plan in partnership with the History Center of Tompkins County and other partners: introduced a public art grant program with heritage elements; supported the development of online map-based tours around several heritage themes; helped start an ongoing Tompkins County Heritage Tourism Group; and began exploring the establishment of a new Heritage Education Center.

Economy | Tourism

Agriculinary Tourism Strategy

Completed the Tompkins County Agriculinary Tourism Implementation Plan, which was adopted by the Strategic Tourism Planning Board in fall 2016. The need for the plan grew out of a focus area in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan. The Agriculinary Plan commits the Tourism Program and community partners to undertake 12 actions in three strategic areas, to be completed by 2020. Actions include establishing backbone support to undertake key initiatives; assessment, training and technical assistance to farms and other businesses; B2B networking support; a branding and marketing strategy; and a new micro-grant program.

Agritourism Development Grant

Administered a USDA grant to develop agritourism resources in the County. 2016 was the second year of this grant, which complements efforts undertaken with local support to grow opportunities for farmers and food producers to expand sales through agritourism and culinary tourism. Core partners included the Ithaca Tompkins County Conventions and Visitors Bureau and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County.



Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail Implementation

Administered a Department of State (DOS) Local Waterfront Revitalization Program grant and work with Cayuga and Seneca Counties to implement the Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail Plan. Completed advance planning and contract with DOS in preparation for project launch in 2017.

Outdoor Recreation Tourism Strategy

Convened an Outdoor Recreation Tourism Task Force and completed an outline and framework for an implementation plan for outdoor recreation tourism, a focus area in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan. The final plan is expected to be completed and adopted by the Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) in 2017.



Tourism Program Administration

Administered the County's four tourism grant programs (Tourism Projects, New Tourism Initiatives, Community Celebrations, and Tourism Marketing and Advertising). In addition supported management of the two tourism grant programs (Arts and Culture Organizational Development and Tourism Capital) overseen by community partners and the five programs (Beautification, Signage and Public Art, Tompkins Festivals, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Discovery Trail, and the Tourism Workforce Development) contracted to other groups.

Tourism Budget Coordination

Successfully led the budget request process among tourism programs, and coordinated the room tax budget among various County departments (including County Administration, Planning and Sustainability, and Finance) to develop a budget proposal for 2017.

Other Tourism Initiatives

- * Established new guidelines for a Strategic Tourism Implementation funding program. Worked with the STPB and community partners to implement the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan and encouraged its integration into Tourism Program activities.

- * Supported the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce and Cornell Cooperative Extension in developing a five-year beautification strategy. The strategy was adopted in spring 2016 and sets out new strategies for improving the aesthetic quality of the community.

- * Supported the Legislature in adopting changes to the local room tax law clarifying that "glamp-grounds" and Airbnb hosts are required to collect room tax. Led a negotiation with Airbnb that led to completion of a voluntary collection agreement with the company whereby they directly collect and remit the required room taxes on behalf of all Airbnb hosts in Tompkins County, which greatly improved compliance.

- * Completed a communications plan for the Tompkins County Tourism Program that describes the audiences and purposes of communication from the program. A new Tourism Program logo and annual report will be developed in 2017.

- * Supported the establishment of pilot public art grant program with CAP. The first year of funding was successful in leveraging additional dollars through a local family foundation and supporting several highly visible new murals. Based on its first-year success, the program is expected to continue in 2017.

"Tourism is about visiting places that are different, unusual, and unique. If every place was just like every place else, there would be no reason to go any place."

- Ed McMahon, Urban Land Institute



Economy/Energy

Energy and Economic Development Task Force

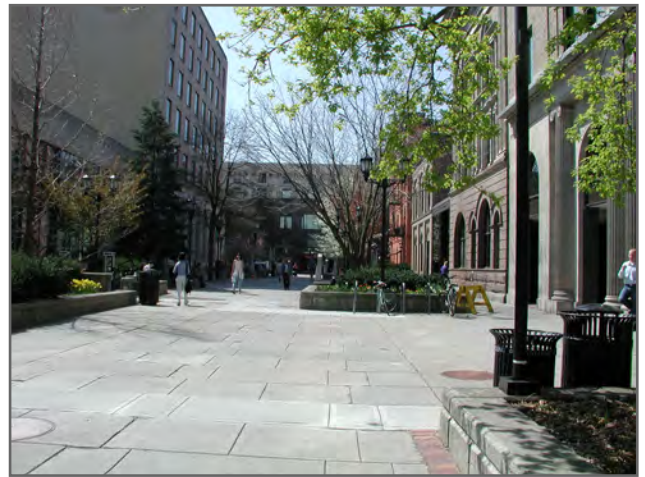
Partnered with Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD) to facilitate the work of the Task Force to address short-term energy needs and emissions in ways that contribute to a vital local economy. The final report and recommendations from the Task Force were released in June 2016. Follow-up with the Public Service Commission (PSC) and NYSEG resulted in the utility considering alternatives to the West Dryden Road pipeline and interest by the PSC in exploring creative methods to reduce demand for natural gas in the Lansing moratorium area.

Industrial Development Agency (IDA) Energy Incentives

In partnership with TCAD, hired a consultant to structure an incentive program to provide enhanced incentives for businesses that invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy systems to reduce their carbon footprint as part of a job-creating expansion. The final report was completed in 2016 and results were presented to the IDA for consideration.

Energy Focus Area Strategy

In partnership with TCAD, hired a consultant to develop a strategy to provide for the energy needs of growing businesses while prioritizing renewable energy solutions and addressing energy concerns in key geographical areas of the County. Phase 1 was completed in 2016, including analysis of the projected energy demand for all four focus areas, and Phase 2 was launched, to look at ways to address energy constraints in a single focus area.



Energize NY Finance

Continued to promote and implement Energize NY, the State's Property Assessed Clean Energy program for commercial properties. There were approximately 10 projects in the County and City of Ithaca working to take advantage of low-cost long-term financing for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, with repayments collected annually through a charge on the tax bill.

Community Microgrid for Critical Facilities, NY Prize

Using grant funds from NYSERDA, worked with a consultant to develop a feasibility assessment of the technical design and system configuration for a proposed community microgrid in the vicinity of the airport. Phase 1 of this work was completed in 2016. Although much was learned about the energy system and potentials in the area, a decision was made to not proceed to Phase 2 at this time.



Water Resources

New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) Relocation Feasibility

Initiated steps to implement the recommendations of the NYSDOT Relocation and Site Redevelopment Feasibility Study to move the NYSDOT maintenance facility from the waterfront in the City of Ithaca to allow redevelopment of the site for more appropriate water-related or enhanced land uses that could contribute to the local economy.

Integrated Natural Infrastructure Program

Developed a proposal for a natural infrastructure program that focuses on protecting water quality in the County's streams, wetlands, and aquifers. The County Legislature approved funding for this program in the five-year capital program beginning in 2017.

Southern End Cayuga Lake Impairment Assessment

Tracked progress by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and other organizations to assess water quality in the southern end of Cayuga Lake, primarily through the services of the Cayuga Lake Monitoring Partnership, a committee of the Water Resources Council.

Wetland Delineation Update

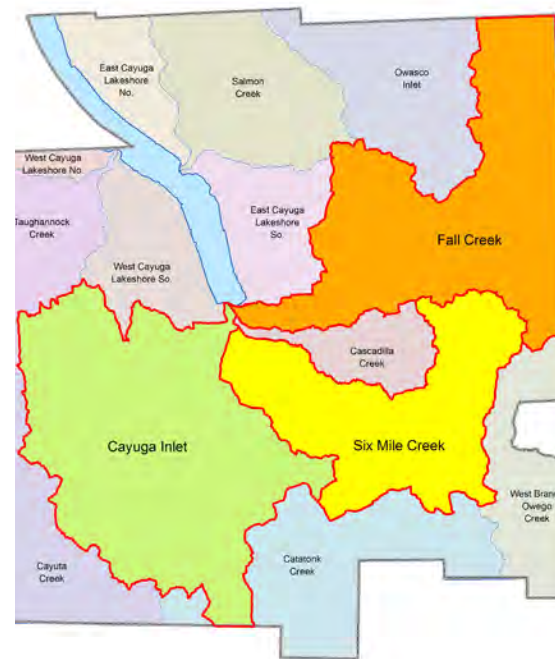
Supported the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network's updated delineation of wetland resources in the County. This data is available online and by contacting the Department.

Aquifer Study Program

Continued to work with the United States Geological Survey and the Town of Enfield on the Enfield Creek Aquifer Study.

Stream Water Quality Monitoring

Continued to provide financial support to the Community Science Institute for volunteer water quality monitoring efforts within Tompkins County.





Natural Resources

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Priorities

Identified 16 farms in the County as PDR priority projects for implementation in the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas. Outreach was conducted to these farms to identify their readiness for the PDR program.

Natural Features Focus Areas (NFFA) Connectivity

Built on the recommendations in the Finger Lakes Trail Corridor Protection Plan to identify specific areas and tools to improve connectivity between Natural Features Focus Areas. The Planning and Sustainability Department contracted with two graduate students in Cornell University's City and Regional Planning Program to conduct an analysis and framework plan for improving habitat connectivity in Tompkins County. The final connectivity plan will be completed in 2017.

The Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection supported the protection of two parcels in 2016 totaling 269 acres, which brings the total acreage protected by the fund to over 960 acres.

Capital Reserve Fund Program

Managed the use of funds in the County's Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection including support for two new acquisitions: the 125-acre Six Mile - Midline Project in the Town of Dryden and the 144-acre Heisey Road Project in the Town of Danby. Total acreage supported by the Capital Reserve Program through 2016: 960 acres.

Stream Corridor Protection Program

Implemented the County's updated flood hazard mitigation program, incorporating watershed-based approaches to reduce the risk of flood damages. 2016 contracted projects include agricultural streamside planting along Fall Creek in Freeville, Cayuga Inlet Sediment Assessment Analysis, and a feasibility study to address erosion along Brown Road in Danby.

Annual Monitoring of Conserved Lands

Conducted annual monitoring of property subject to land protection agreements to which the County is a party, including both agricultural conservation easements and riparian protection agreements. In 2016, this included four farms with a total of 2,242 acres, and 2,979 feet of riparian corridors.

Purchase of Agricultural Development Rights Program

Worked with the Town of Caroline and a landowner to apply for New York State Farmland Protection Implementation Grant funds to acquire agricultural conservation easements for a farm on Six Mile Creek. Grant funds for this project were not awarded.

Tompkins County Conservation Partners

Convened meetings of the Conservation Partners twice over 2016. Meetings focused on establishing local conservation priorities and habitat connectivity.

Environmental Notice Bulletin (ENB) Monitoring

Reviewed the NYSDEC's ENB monthly to identify any SEQR or Other Notices, SPDES Permits, or completed NYSDEC applications of import in Tompkins County and pursue necessary action if warranted.

Agricultural District Annual Additions

Supported work of Cornell Cooperative Extension to manage landowner applications to be added to one of the County's two Agricultural Districts. Review proposed additions for consistency with the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan. One small parcel was removed as part of this year's review.

Unique Natural Areas (UNA) Inventory Update

Provided data and mapping support to the Environmental Management Council for continued update of the Inventory of UNAs.



Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Energy Roadmap

A final report evaluating local energy resources and developing scenarios to meet the County's 80% GHG emission reduction goal and projected energy needs through 2050 was completed in March 2016. This accomplishment was followed by presentations within the County and at a statewide conference in Buffalo.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventories

In September 2016, completed detailed greenhouse gas emissions inventories for both the community and the Tompkins County government using 2014 data and presented results to the Legislature. Went beyond traditional GHG accounting methods to show results if latest climate science findings on methane were applied to the inventory.

Municipal Tools to Promote Deployment of Renewable Energy Systems

Researched model ordinances and renewable energy systems to develop draft guidance to municipalities on key provisions to include in local ordinances regulating and supporting development of renewable energy systems. Outreach for this work will take place in 2017.

Management of energy and sustainability records

In addition to seeking out more detailed energy-related records for the County Government Operations GHG Inventory, staff acquired records and analyzed them for use in the County budget and for tracking sustainability-related progress and data inquiries.

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan

Worked with Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council and a consultant to identify electric vehicle (EV) charging station needs and opportunities. This initiative included a report on EV existing conditions and best practices in Tompkins County, developing a charging

station site suitability tool, applying the tool to nominated sites, and developing detailed site analysis for seven sites in the County.



County Government Facility and Fleet Initiatives

Electric Vehicle Fleet

Purchased five Chevy Volts for the Mental Health Department. Helped identify funding assistance from a State grant. EV charging stations were also installed at the Mental Health parking lot.

Airport Terminal Renovation

Developed plans to renovate the airport terminal, with particular emphasis on energy upgrades. Provided input to identify proposed upgrades that would reduce natural gas use at the terminal by at least 40%. The airport has applied for grant funding to undertake terminal renovations including energy upgrades.

Climate Change Adaptation



Disaster Recovery Plan

Hired a graduate student intern to research disaster recovery planning. The goal is to prepare the community to take the actions, including those that build economic resilience, necessary to bounce back from a disaster should one occur.

Pipeline Inventory

Engaged a consultant to conduct an inventory of pipeline stream crossings in the County and identify those of highest priority in order to advance measures to reduce risk to human health and the environment. In 2017, the project will enter the field-work phase and is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Ludlowville Flood Mitigation Phase II

Pending the release of Federal grant funds, prepared to implement drainage work in the Salmon Creek watershed designed to further mitigate flood damage in Ludlowville. As of December 2016, the fully executed contract for the release of these grant funds had not yet been received.



Healthy Communities

Healthy Communities Strategy

- * Developed a scope of work for a healthy communities strategy for Tompkins County.
- * Provided leadership for the community's efforts to complete priority trails, including the Cayuga Waterfront Trail and the Black Diamond Trail, and established a formal role in future trail development.

GIS/Mapping & Data Services

County GIS Support

- * Provided data, data analysis, and maps for many planning activities including the UNA update, the IthacaTrails.com website, the Energy Roadmap, Housing, Natural Resources, Agricultural District mapping, infill analysis, and foreclosure mapping.

Update of Land Use Land Cover

- * Completed the 2015 Land Use and Land Cover Inventory and analysis. Land use and land cover classes were updated using 2015 aerial imagery. During this process the building outlines were updated and locations of PV systems were also mapped. The stream centerline file was also updated to reflect the geomorphological changes that have occurred since the streams were mapped in 1991.

- * Updated the Open Space Inventory.

Municipal and Nonprofit GIS Services

- * Provided GIS support to the Towns of Lansing and Ulysses on their comprehensive plans and zoning maps.

U.S. Census Bureau Data

- * Continued to provide technical assistance to other County departments to interpret the results of the 2010 Census of Population, the American Community Survey, and other Census publications. Updated the County's Census data webpage.



Other Activities

SEQR Policy Update

Began work on revising the County's Administrative Policy on SEQR to reflect best practices.

Foreclosed Properties

In 2016, 17 parcels subject to foreclosure were reviewed for existence and significance of natural, cultural, and historic resources. One parcel located on Fall Creek in Freeville was recommended for removal from auction to pursue a sale to the Village. Two other parcels previously withheld were recommended for inclusion in auction subject to deed restrictions protecting their natural features.

Measures/Indicators

Identified measures to be tracked over time to determine if the Comprehensive Plan is achieving its goals.

Development Review

Reviewed and made recommendations on development proposals. These documents are reviewed under the authority granted the Department by the County Charter, under §239 -l, -m, and -n of the General Municipal Laws of New York State, and under the requirements of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). There were 160 reviews conducted in 2016, 33% more than 2015.

Partnerships and Support

HeatSmart Tompkins

Advised and assisted the Solar Tompkins Board of Directors in launching HeatSmart II, the second round of a county-wide energy efficiency and heat pumps program. Again acted as the fiscal sponsor for a Park Foundation grant that supported that effort. The HeatSmart I program succeeded in helping nearly 100 households in Tompkins County improve home energy performance. Fifty-two (52) homes made building shell improvements, 26 installed ASHP systems for space heating/cooling, 14 installed GSHPs, and 11 installed air-sourced heat pump domestic hot water units. These systems were valued at over \$1.4 million, stimulating local and regional home energy efficiency and heat pump market growth.

Ithaca 2030 District

In 2016, the District was officially launched with Tompkins County joining as a founding member. The goal of the Ithaca 2030 District is to reduce energy demand, transportation emissions, and water use in downtown commercial buildings.

Energy Smart Community

Worked with Avangrid staff and other community partners to develop a framework for integrated systems planning, and other aspects of the utility's proposed Energy Smart Community focused on Tompkins County.

Reforming the Energy Vision Clean Energy Demonstration Project

Collaborated with NYSEG, Taitem Engineering, and other community partners to develop a demonstration project to explore how the utility's involvement and support can help communities meet their energy goals.

Climate Smart Community (CSC) Certification

Worked with a Cornell Cooperative Extension intern to analyze County sustainability efforts in relation to the points needed to achieve CSC Certification, gathered necessary data and documentation, and coordinated with NYSDEC to overcome the particular challenges the program poses for county governments. Final data submission occurred in January 2017.



Residential Energy Score Project

In July 2016, a consortium of five municipalities in partnership with Tompkins County and Cornell Cooperative Extension, completed the final report evaluating building envelope rating methods and considering how best to create value for energy efficiency in the local housing market. This project was funded by a NYSERDA Cleaner Greener Communities grant. All five municipalities endorsed the report and program. Follow-up included exploration of how to fund and launch a pilot program in 2017.

Administration

County Compliance

Assured that departmental practices are in line with Federal, State, and County policies and kept abreast of changing requirements.

Website Management

Updated the Department's website to better share the results of the Department's work with the community.



ITCTC Planning Committee
 NYS Open Space Committee
 NY Upstate American Planning Association Board
 Sustainability Center Board
 Solar Tompkins Board
 Tompkins County Area Development

Board Support

Provided staff support to the operation of, and participate as members of, the following boards and committees:

County Sustainability Team
 Environmental Management Council
 Housing Fund Program Oversight Committee/Application Review Committee
 Planning Advisory Board
 Strategic Tourism Planning Board
 Water Resources Council

Board Service

Served as members on the following boards and committees:

Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board
 Air Service Board
 Cayuga Lake Scenic Byways Board of Directors
 Homeownership Program Oversight Committee
 Infrastructure Cabinet

Collaborative Partnerships

Participate in collaborative partnerships with others in the community, regionally or in New York State:

Age-friendly Community Committee
 City of Ithaca Water Recreation Committee
 Economic Development Collaborative
 Finger Lakes ReUse Center Board
 Energy and Economic Development Task Force
 Homeless and Housing Task Force
 NYSAC Planning Directors
 Senior Housing/Lifespan Housing Group
 Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council Tourism Working Group
 Southern Tier Regional Energy Working Group
 Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative
 Tompkins County Heritage Tourism Network
 Tompkins County Trails Network